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ABSTRACT

In 1992, Hudson County Community College (HCCC), in New Jersey, began a mission review process to expand from a limited, career-oriented institution to a comprehensive urban community college. Mission statements were reviewed from 67 comprehensive community colleges in 22 states and a questionnaire was devised to determine college staff and community perceptions of the importance of 33 possible functions, programs, or services; record personal/professional data; and generate open-ended comments. The questionnaire was distributed to 1,117 HCCC staff and students, county residents, and representatives from business and industry, with 367 responses being received. Functions ranked as most important by respondents included career and transfer-oriented degree programs, comprehensive curriculum, affordability and physical accessibility, and job re-training. Items ranked lowest in importance were access regardless of educational background, college as resource for economic development, courses to develop informed citizenry, space for community groups, intercollegiate athletic teams, and bilingual courses. Responses also indicated that there were no significant differences between the college and community responses, but respondents who identified themselves as "informed" rated every item as more important than those who identified themselves as "not informed." From these activities, a draft mission statement was prepared and discussed at an all-day forum held with 100 college and community members. Finally, a new mission statement was adopted in April 1993. (KP)

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BRINGING THE COMMUNITY IN: A MISSION RENEWAL PROCESS
AS A FRAMEWORK FOR INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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"Effectiveness suggests that a college has a discernible mission, is producing outcomes that meet constituency needs, and can conclusively document the outcomes it is producing as a reflection of its mission." (Community Colleges: Core Indicators of Effectiveness. A Report of the Community College Roundtable, p.8. Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges, 1994).

At its September 21, 1992 meeting, the Board of Trustees of Hudson County Community College (HCCC) authorized the recently appointed president of the college, Glen Gabert, "to implement a process that will culminate in the submission of a draft revised mission statement to the Board no later than April 1993." This mandate was taken as an opportunity to move the college from a limited-mission institution that emphasized career-oriented programs to a comprehensive urban community college. In addition, it was anticipated that the mission review process would enable the college to renew its internal structure and culture and to enhance its relationships with external communities.

The Board also recognized the importance of "bringing the community into the mission renewal process." In the words of the Resolution calling for the new mission statement:

the Board recognizes that the mission statement must be revised periodically in order to reflect the current and projected needs of the county and its residents, and [that] the students, alumni, faculty, staff, administrators, members of the Board, and representatives from the community must be involved in the process of revision....

The Mission Review Process

For a period of six months representatives of the college community and of the external community were involved in a multi-dimensional process leading to the development

of a revised mission statement. At each step, an ongoing process of gathering, analyzing, and sharing information and then gathering, analyzing, and sharing feedback took place.

1. Review of Mission Statements from Other Comprehensive Community Colleges

During the period from October 1992 through January 1993, mission statements and mission-related documents were obtained from 67 comprehensive community college in 22 states. The most frequently represented states were: New Jersey (12), New York (8), Illinois (7), Michigan (4), Florida (4), Arizona (4), California (4), and Texas (4). The most frequently represented state is the home of the college's licensure authority, and the two most frequently represented states are within the jurisdiction of the college's accrediting authority (Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools).

Additional criteria used in the selection of colleges included comprehensive mission, diverse population in service area, and national reputation.

The mission statements and related documents were gathered in two volumes, photocopied, and placed, for examination purposes, at each of the college's locations.

The invitation to members of the college community to review these documents put the word out that the mission review process was to be an open one: involvement was generated. Many persons commented on how much they had learned from this review: the educational process was initiated. Faculty and staff began to envision new possibilities at HCCC: the renewal of the college had begun. In their mission examination process, members of the college community were reminded that:

An ideal mission statement should stress the general and the particular, that is, what HCCC has in common with other comprehensive community colleges and what distinguishes HCCC from other comprehensive community college.

They were also reminded to think of the following question: Does the mission statement address the needs of Hudson County and of its residents?

2. Surveys of College and County Communities

Early on it was decided that it was important to be as inclusive as possible. Surveys of the college community and of the county community were planned. Such surveys would serve not only to gather information and generate interest in the mission review, but could also be used to increase awareness about the college, to enhance the image of the college, and to generate a sense of meaningful involvement and ownership.

During November 1992, questionnaires relevant to a mission review were obtained from other colleges. A questionnaire was constructed based on a model of one obtained from Johnson County Community College (KS) and was distributed to over 1,117 persons. The sample included all college employees and a sample of students (both part-time and full-time); alumni; and community representatives from business and industry; education; government; health and human services; and the legal, insurance, and real estate professions. Responses were received from one-third of the sample ($N=367$); the return rate for the college community was 41% (226 of 544) and the return rate for the external community was 25% (141 of 573).

The questionnaire contained three sections: (1) perceived importance of 33 possible functions, programs, or services the college could offer; (2) personal/professional data; and (3) an open-ended item, "We would appreciate any comments you might have about Hudson

County Community College." The two versions of the questionnaire (college community and external community) were identical with the exception of a question regarding either college affiliation (e.g. student, faculty) or county occupational/ organization affiliation (e.g. business, community group).

The questionnaire enabled us to gather information not only about what respondents considered important to include in the college's mission, but also to gather information about how the college was viewed, to enhance public awareness of the college, and to examine the extent to which there was agreement among the various internal and external constituencies. One of the secondary benefits of the surveys was the positive impact that the process had on a number of the respondents, e.g., "Great effort with this questionnaire. Almost all items are very important. Thank you for sending me this survey." "Thank you for conducting this survey. It is nice to know that the college is attempting to meet the real needs of the community. I wish you great success in this effort." "I think your survey covered a wide range of important categories. I am particularly pleased to see such a strong focus on education. I wish you much luck and success with future plans for your facility." "I think you are proceeding in the right direction: to survey the community's expectations of a county college." "This survey will reveal how Hudson County Community College needs to go in order to meet educational needs." In the final comment, the respondent sets out an implementation program for us:

This needs assessment could be a useful tool for the Community College if it results in a 'Mission Statement' that truly reflects the broad directions of the school and if the assessment results in strategic planning with goals and objectives.

3. Review of Background Documents

The college held an all-day forum to consider issues related to the mission.

Background documents were collected and distributed to the participants so that they would be prepared to take an active role in the forum.

These documents were, in addition to the two volumes of mission statements from other community colleges described earlier and an orientation to community colleges [Community Colleges in the 1990's by Glen Gabert, (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Fastback 318, 1991)],:

- Draft Revised Mission Statement Resolution of the College's Board of Trustees (September 21, 1992).
- Mission, Goals, and Objectives Statement from Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education (1982). Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.
- A Comprehensive Urban Community College: A Vision for the Future (1991). Department of Higher Education, State of New Jersey.
- Philosophy, Mission and Goals Statement from Hudson County Community College, Master Plan, 1986-1991: A Strategic Vision (1986).
- Overview of National Sample of 67 Mission Statements from Comprehensive Community Colleges (1993). (Described in Step 1).
- Hudson County Community College Mission Survey Results (1993). (Described in Step 2).
Comments from College Community.
Comments from External Community.
Responses from College Community and from External Community.

4. All-Day Mission Forum

On February 27, 1993, an all-day forum was held. Prior to the forum, all those who accepted the invitation to attend were given the background documents (Step 3) and a copy of the draft of a possible mission statement.

Approximately one hundred college and county community members attended.

Participants included representatives from all college and community groups included in the surveys.

The president of the college and the Board of Trustees took an active part in the forum. The keynote speaker was Dr. Louis W. Bender, a nationally recognized authority on community colleges.

After the keynote address, the group broke into eight smaller focus groups to consider specific issues related to the college's future and mission. The focus groups purposefully included a mix of students, faculty, administrators, support staff, maintenance staff, security personnel, trustees and community members. Faculty, administrators, staff and students served as facilitators, resource persons, and recorders for each group. Examples of the issues are:

"How can the mission of a comprehensive urban community college be developed among the college staff?"

"What special obligations does HCCC have, as a higher education service provider to a population that includes large numbers of persons for whom English is not a first language?"

"What does HCCC need to do to meet its responsibilities as a transfer College providing the first two years toward a baccalaureate education?"

"How can an understanding of the role of HCCC as a comprehensive urban community college be developed in the general community?"

When the larger group reconvened, a representative from each focus group presented a summary of the group's deliberations. Following the forum, the proceedings from each focus group were sent to all participants.

5. New Mission Statement and Beyond

A draft mission statement was drawn up based on activities through early February.(Steps 1-3). As mentioned earlier this was shared with participants of the forum.(Step 4). It was also distributed to all employees for feedback. Following the forum and feedback from the college community, the draft was revised and in March 1993 shared again with the college community through publication in the staff newsletter, HCCC Network, and with the county community through mailings to those who had earlier received the mission questionnaire. Again feedback was sought.

Once again, community respondents indicated the degree to which they valued participation in the mission renewal process, and the degree to which the draft mission statement was responsive to the needs of the community: "The mission statement appears to be most comprehensive and should serve the college well as a guide. It does seem to reflect the community (Hudson) which it serves." "The statement and goals seem to be very appropriate to your mission at Hudson County Community College. I look forward to working with you in the future." "We have examined your Mission Statement and find it to be appropriate to your needs as well as to those of the community of Hudson County. As an employer in the Hudson County area, we are flattered that you have asked us to give our comments regarding your statement. We thank you for your consideration, and look forward to working with you for our recruitment needs." "Congratulations on a job well done. The draft of the HCCC mission statement reads very well and presents the image of an institution committed to service the community.... Thank you for the opportunity to be an active participant in this important task. Wish you every success."

The new mission statement for the comprehensive urban HCCC was adopted by the Board of Trustees at its April 13, 1993 meeting.

The adoption of a new mission statement was a means to an end and not an end in itself. On April 14, 1993, the HCCC community began the long-term processes of mission implementation and institutionalization. During this past year, five new academic programs have been offered; the general education requirement has been revised; additional full-time faculty have been added; a business and industry center was established; community outreach activities have been enhanced; community representatives have been invited to the college to meet with administrators, faculty and staff; a new table of organization has been adopted; a new building has been purchased and a campus plan has been developed; and, a number of services, e.g., maintenance and security, have been outsourced. In a year from now we will be in a position to begin to examine the effectiveness of these and other activities.

Although there were particular aspects in the history of HCCC, e.g., limited-mission, lack of centralized campus, reliance on full-time faculty of cooperating colleges, that led to the call for the re-examination of the mission statement, the re-examination process employed is a general one and can be adapted to the needs of other institutions.

Mission Survey Results

The most obvious reason for administering the college mission survey was to identify which activities the county representatives and college community members believed were most important for the college to provide. Respondents were asked to rate each of 33 items anywhere from 'not very important' (a score of 1) to 'very important' (a score of 5), and the

questionnaire included items ranging all the way from offering degree programs preparing students for transfer to opening college rooms for use by community groups.

The range of ratings, the means, and the standard deviations were obtained for each item; however, in order to make the data manageable for this presentation we will concentrate on the mean scores. The highest mean score for any one item was 4.75 and the lowest was 3.14. From this bit of information alone, it is evident that all items were considered at least moderately to very important. Since the intention of the college was to move toward becoming a comprehensive urban community college, this result was gratifying. However, this fact by itself would have not aided us further in drawing up a comprehensive statement; it would not have helped us differentiate relative levels of importance for the different activities.

What Was Important/What Was Not As Important?

The activities or issues considered most important by the respondents included the following:

- Career and/or Transfer Oriented Degree Programs
- A Comprehensive Curriculum
- Affordability and Physical Accessibility
- A Centralized Campus
- Job Re-training
- Academic Support (Developmental and English as a Second Language Courses, and Tutoring and Advising)

Items pertaining to these areas were given mean ratings of 4.0 or greater on the scale of 1 to 5. This is not particularly surprising given the fact that these activities or issues either were known and represented the history of the college (career oriented degree programs, job

training, tutoring/advising and developmental/ESL courses); current developments at the college (transfer oriented degree programs); the hopes of the community (a centralized campus and a comprehensive curriculum); or the reality of the situation (the need for affordable and accessible education).

Items rated moderately important (means of 3.5 to 3.9) included the following:

- Advanced Courses for High School Students
- Leadership for Educational Collaboration
- Comprehensive College
- Adult and Continuing Education
- Support to Business and Industry for Economic Development
- Skills Courses for Private and Public Employees
- Social and Social Awareness Activities
 - Extracurricular Student Activities
 - Cultural and International Relations Experiences
- Adult Literacy, GED and Professional Education Courses
- Courses at Satellite Centers

Many of these items most likely were not as familiar to those completing the survey.

The items receiving the lowest rating (means of 3.0 to 3.4) included:

- Access Regardless of Educational Background
- College as Resource for Economic Development
- Courses to Develop Informed Citizenry
- Opening Space for Community Groups
- Intercollegiate Athletic Teams
- Bilingual Courses

It should be repeated that, though respondents ranked these last items lower than others, even these were rated as 'Important.' While it may not have been surprising that the college's potential role in community development was not recognized, it was somewhat surprising that access, and bilingual courses were rated lower since they are elements that distinguish this particular college and intercollegiate athletic teams have won national and regional recognition.

Did College and County Respondents Agree?

We were interested in learning whether there was congruence in the views of the college community members and county representatives as to the activities to be embraced by the mission of the college.

What we found was that respondents affiliated with the college rated 30 of the 33 activities or issues on average as more important than respondents from the county rated them. The differences, however, were only slight, with mean responses on only three items from the two groups differing by more than .50 on the scale of 1.00 to 5.00. Those three items included offering developmental courses, providing tutoring and advising, and sponsoring intercollegiate athletic teams. The only item to fall below the middle rating of 3.0 (Important) was intercollegiate athletic teams, rated 2.850 by the county representatives.

Did It Matter If Respondents Considered Themselves Informed?

Finally, we were interested in learning whether there would be any difference in the views of respondents who considered themselves informed about the programs and services provided by the college and those who felt uninformed. On the questionnaire, therefore, we asked respondents to categorize themselves on a scale from 1.00 to 5.00 as 'not very well informed,' 'somewhat informed,' 'informed,' 'quite well informed,' or 'very well informed.' For analysis, we collapsed these groups into two groups: the informed and the uninformed. The 'informed' included those who considered themselves informed to very well informed, and the 'uninformed' included those who considered themselves either somewhat or not very well informed.

What we found interested us very much. Every single item was rated as more important (had a higher mean rating) by the 'informed' respondents than by the 'uninformed' respondents. Again, the differences were only slight, but six items received mean ratings differing by more than .50. These items included providing educational leadership to the community, intercollegiate athletic teams, student activities, courses for public employees, centralized campus, and a comprehensive college.

What Does It All Mean?

Since we had found such a strong relationship between the ratings on the one hand and either the respondents' affiliation with the college and the degree of being informed on the other hand, we analyzed these two variables simultaneously. When we did this we found the following: in most cases, items were rated as *more important* by respondents who were *affiliated with the college* and considered themselves *informed*, and items were rated as *less important* by *county* representatives who considered themselves *uninformed*. This pattern prevailed for 19 of the 33 items.

Although the logic seems simple, the lesson is a powerful one for directing the activities of the college. The suggestion is that if we can assure that our constituents are informed, and as well, attempt to engage them in some way with the college, no matter what the activity or issue the college may be involved in, those constituents will be more likely to support it. For Hudson examples of just such involvement include

the all day mission forum

the survey itself

and other examples include

- using advisory committees
- planning enrollment management activities
- keeping residents informed in their own languages -- multilingual brochures and CRT announcements on the PATH (the transit between New Jersey and New York) in various languages

The common belief exists in admissions and enrollment management on many campuses that if you can get a student to actually visit the college campus, they will enroll; here we are finding confirmation for an extension of that tenet for college planning and public relations officials.

For Hudson County Community College, the lesson learned is even more specific, however. When we consider the ratings given each activity according to the respondent's affiliation with the college and degree of feeling informed about the college we found the following.

Consensus

First, we found that there was agreement among all four groups¹ on the relative importance of the following activities or issues (the rating means differed by less than .50 on a scale of 1.0 to 5.0):

Considered most important by all groups (means 4.0 or higher)

¹ The four groups are: (1) college affiliated and informed, (2) college affiliated, but uninformed, (3) not affiliated with the college, but informed, and (4) not affiliated with the college and uninformed.

- Career and/or Transfer Oriented Degree Programs
- Affordability and Physical Accessibility
- A Comprehensive Curriculum
- Job Re-training

Considered moderately important by all groups (means 3.5 - 3.9)

- Advanced Courses for High School Students
- Skills Courses for Private Employees
- Adult and Continuing Education
- Support to Business and Industry for Economic Development
- Adult Literacy, GED and Professional Education Courses
- Courses at Satellite Centers

Considered important by all groups (means 3.0 - 3.4)

- College as Resource for Economic Development
- Courses to Develop Informed Citizenry
- Opening Space for Community Groups

The concern for the college revolves around the level of emphasis which should be placed on activities alluded to by items in this third group, activities less tightly coupled to the traditional educational role in higher education. Will we carry out such activities, and if so how do we inform the community in order to gain support for such efforts?

Dissensus

Disagreement was found among the four groups on the remainder of the items (the rating means differed by .50 to .92 on a scale of 1.0 to 5.0):

Generally considered most important (means 4.0 or higher), but uninformed county respondents rated lower than others

- A Centralized Campus
- Academic Support (Developmental and English as a Second Language Courses, and Tutoring and Advising)

Generally considered moderately important (means 3.8), but the uninformed rated lower than others

- Leadership for Educational Collaboration
- Comprehensive College
- Skills Courses for Public Employees

Generally considered moderately important (means 3.6), but uninformed county respondents rated lower than others

- Social and Social Awareness Activities
 - Extracurricular Student Activities
 - Cultural and International Relations Awareness

Ratings declined from being considered important by informed college respondents (means ~3.5) to somewhat important by uninformed county respondents (means ~2.7)

- Access Regardless of Educational Background
- Intercollegiate Athletic Teams
- Bilingual Courses

This final list representing dissensus presents a real challenge to the college. Some of the activities are and always have been central to our mission (e.g. academic support, access regardless of educational background). Some of the activities distinguish the college (bilingual courses for an immigrant population, and winning athletic teams even without proper facilities). Others reveal an unfamiliarity with a chosen future for the college (centralized campus and comprehensive college).

Survey Conclusions

The obvious reason we carried out this survey was to contribute to the review of the mission of the college. By including the college community and county representatives in the process, we gleaned information from the community (a form of environmental scanning). A less obvious reason why we *should* have carried out this survey (which we are learning as we

analyze the results), is that by doing so we have, even if inadvertently, helped to inform the community about the activities of the college. It stands to reason that county representatives would enjoy having been included in the process and that positive feelings could result, but this analysis helps confirm how this inclusive action holds pragmatic benefits for the college.

The lists of activities where disagreements were found in the importance ratings between the college and county communities and the activities with low ratings by both groups present an agenda for consideration by the college planners and public relations officials. The results indicate that the college and county communities are generally quite supportive of a comprehensive mission for the college. However, there is more support for the core academic endeavors (affordable and accessible occupational and transfer degree and certificate programs) than there is for the wide range of activities normally associated with a comprehensive community college. If the college intends to fulfill its chosen comprehensive mission, promotion efforts aimed both within and without the college will be required.

We had our particular reasons for administering this mission survey at Hudson County Community College, but such a survey can be valuable for other institutions as well.